



Hardy, Hunnewell & Upham Master Plan Committee

PUBLIC FORUM
October 27, 2016

Break-Out Group Comments

The following comments were transcribed during the Public Forum and have been edited only to correct typographical errors.

Willing to pay more; walkability, safety, community
Want 3 schools; traffic advantages; time of travel; equal distribution
Not in favor of 2 schools – Hardy table
Would like more discussion of educational considerations; more depth
More details other than class size are necessary
In order to close a school need concrete reasons; need margin of error in space
Upham, Fiske, Middle, PAWS; no popular support for 2 school solution; need affordable recommendation for 3 schools w/<400 students; Wellesley = small schools
Impact of traffic on school areas and total town
What happens if school closes? Unknown is a problem. Need to know what will happen to closed spaces
Swing space shouldn't be a driving determination of the decision.
Pros re 3 schools: neighborhood schools are small; better for teachers
Cons: impact on grade
Sustainability concerns re building 3 schools

Tremendous incremental cost to build 3 schools
<p>Reason to move to Wellesley = neighborhood schools. Must maintain neighborhood small schools</p> <p>Discussion should center on educational needs. How will students learn best? Feedback from teachers and administrators should be added to discussion.</p> <p>What would teachers choose if designing from a blank slate?</p>
<p>Small schools are superior for education</p> <p>Do not agree with 42 classrooms. If more classrooms, extras could be used for other purposes.</p> <p>Only 3 school scenario would be supportable.</p> <p>Existing sites are adequate; N 40 should not be considered.</p>
<p>People move to Wellesley for the schools; value small school model</p> <p>Education and quality should be discussed, e.g. problems of larger schools (bullying, emotional needs)</p> <p>Want more evidence re larger school effects</p>
<p>Vote at one table: 1 – 2 school</p> <p>2 – not enough info</p> <p>4- 3 school option most viable b/c of ed impact and neighborhood schools</p>
<p>Consensus to avoid closing a school</p> <p>People move here because of neighborhood schools</p> <p>Meaning of neighborhood school: more than just kids from immediate area; live close to the area; importance of walkability; encourages socialization</p> <p>Tolerate \$1000 impact. Not much impact on operating costs.</p>

Any solution must be fair to all. Closing school would cause impact on property values; impact on traffic patterns.

[The following comments were added following the Public Forum to more completely summarize discussions reported from one table.]

Pros of a 2 School Solution:

1. Slightly more cost effective both in the short term (building process) and long term (ongoing operational costs).
2. Less likely any school/grade would have drop to one section

Cons of a 2 School Solution:

1. Bigger Schools/More students
2. More students outside the walking zone
3. Possible to lose the neighborhood school feel

Pros of a 3 School Solution:

1. Keep the "neighborhood feel" that people move to Wellesley for in the first place
2. Allow for a greater percentage of walkers
3. Keep current staffing levels
4. Avoid the "super school" scenario (in terms of building size and number of students)
5. Potentially smaller class sizes as kids are distributed across 7 schools instead of 6
6. Good for housing values
7. Sets our town apart from other towns which have consolidated and gone big

8. Unique opportunity when interest rates are low to put our stamp on elementary education that we know works

9. The incremental tax increase is not that significant... for most it's a dinner for 4 at Blue Ginger!

10. Less traffic as buses and cars are spread among more schools, not concentrated

Cons of a 3 School Solution:

1. More building/renovation disruption

2. More expensive/higher taxes

3. More upkeep over the years ahead

If a 2 school solution is recommended, what factors should be considered as to the location of the 2nd school:

1. Traffic flow

2. Little disruption to green space/environment

3. Place the new school where the student population is growing (Hardy) and NOT where the student population is shrinking (Upham)

Agreed [with decision to target 116 sections] as long as there's additional space at each school in the event the population swells. For instance, at Hardy the current number of classrooms is NOT enough... we've lost our music and art space two years in a row. The section distribution needs to accommodate this issue so no students are without specialist space.

WRITTEN NOTES FROM BREAK-OUT GROUPS

The following notes were written on flip charts and other paper at individual break-out group tables during the Public Forum.

Table included 9 people, 6 from Hardy (3 with kids, one without kids, one with grandson), one from Hunnewell with older kids, one from Fiske with adult children, and one from Sprague with adult children.

Concerned about environmental issues of using North 40.

People driving this want 2 schools.

Hardy is too congested around Weston Road

Must have 2 schools north of Rte 9.

Want 3 schools.

Warren rec center?

Upham is light on enrollment; Hardy lots of kids. Redistrict.

PAWS needs to be part of the discussion. Would bring number of classrooms needed above 42.

Administration wants 2 schools.

Do not think enrollment projections are accurate.

What is the best for educational, social, and emotional needs of children? Need more discussion on this point. Why don't we have this discussion?

Sprague ranking went down. Was it because of school size?

Upham and Hardy have the "formula" for success.

250-300 is a good size for a school.

Very few people want 2 schools.

Upham abutters do not want a bigger school there.

Traffic?

\$ is the only reason to support 2 schools.

Hardy could be used for another purpose. People on the committee have knowledge of what the land is worth.

Look at the unified plan.

Is affordable housing tied to this?

No historic preservation of Hardy. Knock the whole building down.

Build in the back of Hardy.

Modest 3-school over fancy 2 schools.

Hardy will not vote for debt exclusion if Hardy not considered or has school.

How will committee discuss educational effects? Best practices for education. NIH research on schools.

How does HHU fit into the Wellesley Unified Master Plan effort that just started?

Size: quality of education, neighborhood, smaller schools.

Most of time discussing 2 v. 3 option. Group voted. 1 person for 2 schools, 2 people need more information, 4 people for 3 schools.

Costs – dismissed as too early to use as a guide.

People moved for schools.

Feel that educational quality of schools has not been discussed in any of these committee iterations.

North 40.

Group of residents from Upham, Fiske, Hady, Bates, and the Middle School.

No popular support for 2 schools.

Develop an affordable recommendation to keep 3 schools open (<400 students)

Wellesley = small, quality neighborhood schools

PAWS integration into plan

WCCC capacity

Big issues: Walkability, class size (low – 19-20), avoid school closing, fair for all (property values, environment), willing to pay the money.

Walkability key

Smaller schools build community

School with neighbors

How does walkability change with 3 v. 2?

Driving increases neighborhood traffic

Traffic impacts commuters

Busing a lot of kids changes community feel

Pros to consolidate? Save \$. Avoid single section situation.

Not advantage to town.

Neighborhood schools – what does that mean?

Walkable – high density near school, freedom of kids to play and walk.

Big Upham with 24 – too big, urban, number of kids, space of school, would loom on the hill.

More \$ for three schools improves value.

3 SCHOOLS

Pros:

Keep neighborhood schools

Smaller (300-350/380)

Walkability

Less change for teachers

Less invasive redistricting

Cons:

2 sections per grade (grade closures)

1 section possibility

Cost – building and operational

Sustainability concerns – building materials and costs

Loss to a community

Cost – it's a lot either way; incremental additional cost

2 v. 3 sections. Inefficiency building with 15 sections.

In MPC meetings, we'd like to hear more about educational considerations as opposed to the logistics of buildings

In order to close any school, which is a living thing, there needs to be indisputable obvious concrete reasons, much like probably existed years ago when [...]

No North 40 – redundant and harder than Hardy site.

If 2 schools, what happens with Bates students? Seems like a massive relocation for them in either situation.

Pros of 3 Schools

Walkability

Less traffic

Better learning environment (better test scores)

Sense of community

More parent participation

Safer

Less overwhelming for kids

More attractive for home buyers

Cons

Cost?

We'll pay the extra \$. It's worth it.

Factors to consider re location of second school

Walkability

Traffic

Natural/geographic boundaries – crossing rt 9

Time of travel

No North 40

Equal distribution of students north and south of Rt. 9

116 target

116 classrooms - not enough.

Schools should be designed to maximize learning and those that do that every day are best suited to say what works and what doesn't.

Educators need to provide feedback/guidance on how an ideal school should be designed.

Emphasis on maintaining the feel of the town as historically defined by neighborhood schools.

Concern that the projections are only as good as current data and models can offer. Examples of errors: Warren, Brown, Kingsbury, etc. Town of Wayland's error required re-opening of school.

Unanimously agree on a 3-school scenario.

More than 50 classrooms can be filled with other educational activities (PAWS, Spanish, computers, new enrollment)

Smaller schools are superior in education and for building stronger communities.

No North 40!

Table from Hardy, Hunnewell, Fiske, and Sprague.